

[From the New York Times, June 24, 2012]

A CRUEL AND UNUSUAL RECORD

(By Jimmy Carter)

ATLANTA.—The United States is abandoning its role as the global champion of human rights.

Revelations that top officials are targeting people to be assassinated abroad, including American citizens, are only the most recent, disturbing proof of how far our nation's violation of human rights has extended. This development began after the terrorist attacks of Sept. 11, 2001, and has been sanctioned and escalated by bipartisan executive and legislative actions, without dissent from the general public. As a result, our country can no longer speak with moral authority on these critical issues.

While the country has made mistakes in the past, the widespread abuse of human rights over the last decade has been a dramatic change from the past. With leadership from the United States, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights was adopted in 1948 as "the foundation of freedom, justice and peace in the world." This was a bold and clear commitment that power would no longer serve as a cover to oppress or injure people, and it established equal rights of all people to life, liberty, security of person, equal protection of the law and freedom from torture, arbitrary detention or forced exile. The declaration has been invoked by human rights activists and the international community to replace most of the world's dictatorships with democracies and to promote the rule of law in domestic and global affairs. It is disturbing that, instead of strengthening these principles, our government's counterterrorism policies are now clearly violating at least 10 of the declaration's 30 articles, including the prohibition against "cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment."

Recent legislation has made legal the president's right to detain a person indefinitely on suspicion of affiliation with terrorist organizations or "associated forces," a broad, vague power that can be abused without meaningful oversight from the courts or Congress (the law is currently being blocked by a federal judge). This law violates the right to freedom of expression and to be presumed innocent until proved guilty, two other rights enshrined in the declaration.

In addition to American citizens' being targeted for assassination or indefinite detention, recent laws have canceled the restraints in the Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Act of 1978 to allow unprecedented violations of our rights to privacy through warrantless wiretapping and government mining of our electronic communications. Popular state laws permit detaining individuals because of their appearance, where they worship or with whom they associate.

Despite an arbitrary rule that any man killed by drones is declared an enemy terrorist, the death of nearby innocent women and children is accepted as inevitable. After more than 30 airstrikes on civilian homes this year in Afghanistan, President Hamid Karzai has demanded that such attacks end, but the practice continues in areas of Pakistan, Somalia and Yemen that are not in any war zone. We don't know how many hundreds of innocent civilians have been killed in these attacks, each one approved by the highest authorities in Washington. This would have been unthinkable in previous times.

These policies clearly affect American foreign policy. Top intelligence and military officials, as well as rights defenders in targeted areas, affirm that the great escalation in drone attacks has turned aggrieved families toward terrorist organizations, aroused civil-

ian populations against us and permitted repressive governments to cite such actions to justify their own despotic behavior.

Meanwhile, the detention facility at Guantánamo Bay, Cuba, now houses 169 prisoners. About half have been cleared for release, yet have little prospect of ever obtaining their freedom. American authorities have revealed that, in order to obtain confessions, some of the few being tried (only in military courts) have been tortured by waterboarding more than 100 times or intimidated with semiautomatic weapons, power drills or threats to sexually assault their mothers. Astoundingly, these facts cannot be used as a defense by the accused, because the government claims they occurred under the cover of "national security." Most of the other prisoners have no prospect of ever being charged or tried either.

At a time when popular revolutions are sweeping the globe, the United States should be strengthening, not weakening, basic rules of law and principles of justice enumerated in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. But instead of making the world safer, America's violation of international human rights abets our enemies and alienates our friends.

As concerned citizens, we must persuade Washington to reverse course and regain moral leadership according to international human rights norms that we had officially adopted as our own and cherished throughout the years.

Jimmy Carter, the 39th president, is the founder of the Carter Center and the recipient of the 2002 Nobel Peace Prize.

HONORING MCKENZIE JOANN POLLOCK

HON. BENNIE G. THOMPSON

OF MISSISSIPPI

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, June 27, 2012

Mr. THOMPSON of Mississippi. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to honor a phenomenal young woman, Ms. McKenzie JoAnn Pollock, daughter of Philip and Cheryl Pollock. Throughout her time in high school, McKenzie has been extremely devoted to both her academics and extracurricular activities.

McKenzie's motivation to excel prompted her to do anything she could to ensure that she would be successful academically. In accordance with this, she took Advanced Placement classes throughout high school and she maintained all "A's" throughout her high school career. As a result of McKenzie's work ethic, she was rewarded numerous scholarships to college. She received the Lucky Day Citizenship Scholarship and the Choral Service Award from the University of Southern Mississippi, as well as the Best Buy Scholarship Award, the Mississippi Eminent Scholars Grant, and the Mississippi Tuition Assistance Grant.

Not only has McKenzie excelled academically, but she has also been heavily involved in numerous extra-curricular activities. She served as the Warren Central Hall of Fame Club President, Student Government Senior Class Secretary; was a member of the Mock Trial Attorney and Witness team, Mu Alpha Theta Society, Varsity Choir, the Band, Drama Club, School Musical, National Honors Society, Youth Advisory Council, and she worked with the Children of the American Revolution

and Fundraising for the Children's Miracle Network. She also works for the U.S. Army Engineering Research and Development Center as a Civil Engineering Technician.

McKenzie has competed in several competitions in addition to her other responsibilities. She was the Poetry Out Loud School winner in 2009, and she has received the Gold Medal at the Mississippi Music Teachers' Association Evaluations (MMTA) and Federated Music Clubs of America for her singing. In 2011, McKenzie was crowned Miss Vicksburg's Outstanding Teen, and she went on to finish in the top ten in the Miss Mississippi's Outstanding Teen Scholarship Pageant.

Per her interest in the performing arts McKenzie is an active theatre participant. She has performed in many productions at the Vicksburg Theatre Guild and the Westside Theatre Foundation. McKenzie strongly believes that the performing arts should be an integral part of a child's education, and she enjoys every opportunity that allows her to introduce children to the arts. During summer of 2011, she was an assistant instructor in the Southern Cultural Center's Spectrum summer arts camp, which allows children the opportunity to explore the arts.

To culminate her high school career, McKenzie is honored to be named Valedictorian of the Warren Central High School's senior class of 2012. In the fall, McKenzie plans to attend the University of Southern Mississippi, where she will major in Music-Vocal Performance with a minor in dance.

Mr. Speaker, I ask our colleagues to join me in honoring the Valedictorian of Warren Central High School's senior class of 2012, Ms. McKenzie JoAnn Pollock an outstanding young woman.

IN HONOR OF THE 10 YEAR ANNIVERSARY OF PLANTATION HOME

HON. DENNIS J. KUCINICH

OF OHIO

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, June 27, 2012

Mr. KUCINICH. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to honor David Stein on the occasion of the tenth anniversary of his interior design business, Plantation Home. Located in downtown Lakewood, Plantation Home offers a unique selection of home furnishings, gifts and accessories. At a time when scores of companies have closed their doors due to turbulent economic upheaval, Plantation Home has weathered those hardships and continues to be one of Lakewood's most successful and community driven companies.

Mr. Stein has graciously committed himself to the betterment of the Lakewood community in which he has lived since 1989. Stein has been a sponsor of the Lakewood Relay for Life, contributes to the Beck Center for Performing Arts, opened his home for the Lakewood Historical Society Home and Garden Tour and served on the City of Lakewood Community Relations Board where he designed a program to establish modern and artistic bus stops. He is the current board President of the Downtown Lakewood Business Alliance where he directs efforts to revitalize and enrich the merchant environment with efforts including a City Wide Street Sale, Spring Stroll and Fashion Show, Streetwalk, Chocolate